

Messenger Newsletter

*First and Grand Ave
United Methodist Churches
Porterville, CA*

Nowhere to Go But Up

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

July 2022

July is a month filled with time off, independence celebrations, and preparations for the fast-approaching school year.

As I write this, I am preparing to go to Poland with the Celebrant Singers. I covet your prayers and ask that you help us by supporting us in prayer that God would open the pathways of people's minds and spirits to hear the message of hope through music and testimony, caring and prayer.

We experienced a marvelous June! We transformed the Fellowship Hall of Grand Avenue into our HayDay VBS farm. At HayDay VBS we learned that our Lord Jesus has made us friends of God! Jesus will always love us. He is our friend!

On a more somber note, the Supreme Court overruled Roe v Wade which established a constitutional right based on the 14th amendment to legalize abortion in 1973.

I was twelve when this occurred. I remember My mother said to me, "Why is it easier to decide who dies than who lives?" Mom was a devout Catholic, fiercely pro-life, but also fiercely pro-women's rights and pro-vulnerable people rights.

Many people like my mother believed that abortion was wrong. Many people like my mom believed that while it's wrong it's better to

have safe, legal, and rare abortions, than illegal, dangerous, common ones.

There are probably many in this church who which staunchly defend either side of the continuum. I'm not extolling the virtues or evils of abortion. I do want to reveal this opportunity the evil one is using to fragment us.

In the Book of Genesis, it says that the descendants of Noah built a great city in the land of Shinar. They built a tower "with its top in the heavens" to "make a name" for themselves. God was offended by the hubris of humanity and said:

Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.

The text does not say that God destroyed the tower, but in many retellings of the story he does, so let's hold that image in our minds: people wandering amid the ruins, unable to communicate, condemned to mutual incomprehension.

Babel is what is happening to us throughout this decade but particularly at this moment. We

have become disoriented, unable to speak the same language or recognize the same truth. We are cut off from one another and from the past.

Babel is a metaphor for what some forms of social media have done to nearly all the groups and institutions most important to the country's future—and to us as a church.

There are many reasons for this: technology, theological drift, the hardening viewpoints formed around extreme emotions that solidify near the extreme ends of the spectrum, and the expectation that a political system and the right political leader will set everything right.

This is simply another version of the people of Babel who wanted to make a name for themselves. As the Church of Jesus Christ, we must simply seek to do better and call out better practices from each of us.

We have shown the same signs of such fragmentation. I'm just as guilty of spending too much time on social media and outlying the boundaries of what it would take to make a name for myself.

Grand Ave even held a straw vote to gain clarity on what is the will of the body concerning our denominational relationship, resulting in an inconclusive vote.

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"If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." Ecclesiastes 4:10

Last month, we were blessed to have a wonderful Vacation Bible School program put on by Melody and some great volunteers. The opening day of the program produced an atmosphere inside the Fellowship Hall that was immersive, with walls covered in farm decorations, fun music flowing through the speakers, and volunteers excited to see the children. When I walked through the barn doors into the Fellowship Hall carrying Presleigh, her eyes lit up and I knew she was beyond curious of what is going on. At first, she was shy, staying close to dad, not really engaging with anyone. But on day two, with the same excited atmosphere and fun activities, she was up and running. At one point in the program, confetti made its way into the audience, flying from buckets tossed in the air and floating down upon the children. This intrigued my daughter, causing her to run straight towards the little pieces of fun she saw laying on the ground. I sat back and waited for the fall, which usually happens when she's running with all she's got.

My daughter tends to fall on the ground quite often like many seventeen months old do. This used to cause me great concern being a new father and not having a clue to how this dad stuff works. When she first started walking and falling, I was quick to pick her up and make sure she was ok. Then she would be off walking and falling again, over, and over. Now that she's been walking for many months, the walking has turned to running and the falling is more accurately described as a crash onto the floor. And when this happens, of course I want to do all I can to help her up,

dust her off, reassure her that she is doing great, and release her back to her adventure.

As Presleigh finally made it to the confetti, I expected her to come crashing down to the ground, but something else happened. A young girl participating in the program reached out and embraced my daughter, as if to make sure she didn't fall. This young girl showed kindness and gentleness, with a smile and open arms to welcome her into the group of children. I sat back and watched as Presleigh smiled back at the girl, not really understanding the invitation, and grabbed a handful of confetti, and tossed it into the air smiling and laughing.

As I watched this short interaction between my daughter and this other young girl, it reminded me of how precious it is to have people in our lives that offer that helping hand when we're

about to fall, whether that fall is physical, spiritual, or even mental. A gesture of kindness and gentleness goes a long way in showing compassion to those around us. And there will always be times in our lives where we will need kindness and gentleness and a helping hand, and as believers in Jesus, it should be a way of life for us.

Sometimes I am not as kind or gentle as I should be, and I need a reminder to slow down and remember who I am in Christ Jesus. This young girl who made the effort on her own without any prompting to help my daughter was the example I needed. Thank you little one for being a beautiful example to all of us adults who at times forget that the small gestures of kindness and gentleness reap beautiful rewards for all who experience the act. Blessings to each of you.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour

Nowhere to Go But Up continued from page 1 by Pastor Tom Buratovich

We did not achieve the supermajority needed largely because of people continuing to wrestle with all the issues.

These are signs of the trauma as we walk around the ruins of Babel. We have tried to make a name for ourselves, and our efforts have only led to a fragmentation that keeps us moving in as many directions as a pot of spaghetti.

So how about we do life together? We pray more and log onto social media less. How about we deeply and slowly, meditatively, and prayerfully read the Bible? I think Jesus would support that, would we?

We have a chance on Wednesday, July 6 at 5:30 p.m. to do exactly this - spend some time together, share a meal, and play Bunco, a game that allows us to meet one another for an evening. I hope you will join us. I hope you will plan to come because you see the larger purpose, the higher calling, the integration that we desperately need.

We can rebuild, but we must do so with the knowledge that we do not build to make a name for ourselves but for a place that the glory of the Lord might regularly dwell and inhabit. Let's get to work!

VBS Wrap Up

HayDay VBS was a wonderful experience for the 20 excited children that attended. They had so much fun. VBS was a two day adventure this year, along with a Sunday Celebration.

When the children arrived, children were greeted by Vic Young, Don and Donita Roulsten at Check-in. They got their name tags and filled out registration papers. Then, they came to the hay stacks to get their picture taken with Melody Burkhart. After this, Hope Overholt taught them to spin yarn out of fleece. The children loved participating in this presentation. It was utterly amazing.

Next came, Moo-sic and More with Pastor Tom. He led the children in some beautiful praise songs. Sunflower Sam visited and needed a heap of help from Pastor Tom. Thank goodness that Tom knew how to help him. Adam Garrett played the part of Sunflower Sam, a farmer that had no clue about how to farm.

Ann White, then, took the children to Bible Adventures. She took them on a wonderful adventure in the life of Zacchaeus. We were able to stand on the street and block Zacchaeus from having a view of the street. Then, we saw Zacchaeus in the tree looking for Jesus. Wyatt Burkhart played the part of Zacchaeus. We also learned that Jesus will always love us, no matter what. Just like He loved Zacchaeus.

On Day 2, Ann taught us about Jesus dying for our sins and that He was resurrected. Our focus was on Peter denying Jesus three times. Ethan Burkhart played the part of Peter. We were able to follow Peter through this time. We learned that even though Peter denied Jesus, Jesus still loved him. Just like us. No matter what happens, Jesus will

always love us.

Next, came Farm Fun Crafts with Melody Burkhart. On Day 1, the

children made a tree with Zacchaeus in it. They glued sticks and leaves on paper, to form a tree. Then used a stamp and put their finger print in the tree. This represented Zacchaeus.

For Day 2, the children made a rooster out of paper plates. Our rooster will remind us that before the rooster crowed, Peter denied Jesus three times.

After this, on the first day, came Hog Wild Games with Dave Hammelmann. They had to wash the pigs. Some balloons (pigs) had shaving cream on them and were attached to one end of a table. The children were at the other end of the table and had squirt bottles that they had to wash the pigs with. They also had a water balloon relay game. They had so much fun getting wet.

On Day 2, the parachutes came out. The children were supposed to keep the balls on the parachutes but I think they thought they were supposed to keep the balls off of the parachutes. Clearly, this game was a hit. They loved it. Next came another relay race with dollies and horse racing.

We, also, had an exciting presentation by Carl Ross. He brought some farm equipment that was about 150 years old. He showed us how farmers used to use this equipment. All the machines helped farmers process corn. One machine cut corn stalks into wafers for food for the cows.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." (Romans 5:11)

Another machine processed corn into chicken feed. The third machine took a corn on the cob and removed the corn from it. The children had so much fun participating in this presentation.

Both days ended with Pastor Tom at Friendship Finale. At this time, we summed up everything that we learned for each day. We concluded with prayer and Worship Music. This was so much fun. On Day 2, we even had a special guest. Jesus made an appearance to show us that He is the light of the world. Ethan Burkhart played the part of Jesus.

Before the children went home, they picked up a sack lunch to go. Cindy Bartlett and Sue Wright put these very cute farm-themed lunches together. The children were so happy and full of smiles as they left the building.

All in all, VBS was a success. That is due to the many volunteers that gave so freely of their time. A huge thank you goes out to all of them. From decorating, helping with the event, to clean up, and also providing food for the children and volunteers. This event would never be what it was without all of the support from the many volunteers. ***Thank you very much!***

May God Bless You,
Melody Burkhart
Children's Sunday School Director

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

After the fall on my hip a couple of weeks ago, I received an e-card with the picture of a puppy and three puppy commands to follow: 1) “Sit!” 2) “Stay!” and 3) “Heal!” instead of “Heel!” Very cute!

Unfortunately, I landed on the same hip that had been fractured in 2017 and repaired surgically. Although it was painful, my fall did not result in another fracture or in any broken screws, thankfully.

In an endeavor to follow those three commands, I’ve been trying to take it easy. But now that I’ve been able to trade the walker for a cane, it’s tempting to “overdo!” There was a good opportunity to sit outside one morning, however when Al had arranged for a landscaping firm to deliver a truckload of bark to our property.

He and I had talked about this project the night before and decided that it would be good for me to supervise the workers in the backyard, while he took on the oversight of the whole operation. We were concerned that they might not see some of the smaller shrubs. However, as it turned out, they were very careful. My being there wasn’t really necessary.

Sitting outside with the sun warming my face was most pleasant. It wasn’t exactly quiet, due to the fleet of trucks coming by for trash pickup, recycling and yard waste. But, in spite of the groaning and grinding of the trucks, the sounds of bird songs could be heard.

While waiting, I looked around at the ever-evolving landscape of our small lot.

Wedged between the white rain gutter and the brick wall of the house, a robin’s nest caught my eye. Long strands of dried grass poked out from the nest, which had been abandoned quite some time ago.

We had watched with interest as a robin pair built the nest early in the spring. The female had abandoned it though without her eggs hatching, as far as we knew. What had happened? Maybe we scared her when we began planting the vegetables in the garden bed nearby. After all of that work, it was too bad that she was not able to raise a family there.

When she was sitting on the nest, the male robin would often call to her from a perch on the edge of the birdbath, also known as “Teddy’s water bowl!” Our late golden retriever could easily reach it and seemed to prefer it to his

own water dish. Oftentimes he would lie down nearby and guard the birdbath, chasing off any little birds that

might try to come down for a drink.

After Teddy had passed away, the birds began using it again regularly. One day I happened to look outside in time to see both robins bathing. The female had left her nest and was chirping loudly to her mate, who dunked himself in the water several times, flapping his wings and spraying it everywhere.

They both seemed quite joyful to have a bath, especially after a few days of warm, dry weather. I imagine that it felt good to her especially, after spending so many hours confined to the nest. There was barely enough room for her to turn around let alone escape the rays of the sun.

Finally, after a couple of hours of “supervising,” the project of spreading out the bark was nearly completed. I left my post and went into the house for breakfast. It had been a nice morning of “sitting and staying,” observing and reflecting... a healing morning for sure.

Just as a time of quiet reflection certainly can help with the healing process, it also creates an opportunity to connect with God, who understands our struggles. When we draw near to Him, we’ll discover that He has been with us all along. It just takes time to sit and stay in His presence in order to heal! God is good!



July 2022 Prayer Calendar

Friday, July 1 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Proverbs 3:6 "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path."

Saturday, July 2 - Pray for the Clothing Closet as it is open by appointment in July.

Sunday, July 3 - Pray for the combined Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church for the month of July.

Monday, July 4 - Pray for our church families as they celebrate Independence Day.

Tuesday, July 5 - Pray for safety for those that are traveling.

Wednesday, July 6 - Pray for the dinner and Bunco gathering at 5:30 p.m. at Grand Ave for joy and kindness of God to reign.

Thursday, July 7 - Pray and reflect on 2 Corinthians 5:7 "For we live by faith, not by sight."

Friday, July 8 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for Sunday Worship Service.

Saturday, July 9 - Pray for the Greeters who will welcome all to Sunday Worship tomorrow.

Sunday, July 10 - Pray for the combined Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church featuring Celebrant Singers before they travel to Poland.

Monday, July 11 - Pray for the community of Porterville.

Tuesday, July 12 - Pray for healing and strength for the ones who are ill and are rehabilitating.

Wednesday, July 13 - Pray for Pastor Tom in Poland with the Celebrant Singers as they seek to share the Good News of Jesus Christ

Thursday, July 14 - Pray and read Bible verse Psalm 9:10 "Those who know your name trust in you, for you Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you."

Friday, July 15 - Pray for the church committees as they make decisions for our churches.

Saturday, July 16 - Pray and reflect on Isaiah 46:4 "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

Sunday, July 17 - Pray for the combined Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. at First United Methodist for the month of July.

Monday, July 18 - Pray for Melody and Ryan as they plan lessons and activities for the children and youth of our churches.

Tuesday, July 19 - Pray and reflect on Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Wednesday, July 20 - Pray and reflect on Psalm 55:22 "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken."

Thursday, July 21 - Praise God and thank Him for our many blessings,

Friday, July 22 - Pray for the prayer groups of our churches.

Saturday, July 23 - Pray and read Joshua 1:5 "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Sunday July 24 - Pray for the combined Sunday Worship at 10 a.m. that will take place at First United Methodist Church for the month of July.

Monday, July 25 - Pray for Celebrant Singers as they return home from Poland. May their witness endure through the Holy Spirit .

Tuesday, July 26 - Pray and read Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Wednesday, July 27 - Pray for Clothing Closet as we seek to share God's love through giving clothes.

Thursday, July 28 - Pray and reflect on Galatians 6:9 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Friday, July 29 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he prepares the "Walking Devotions".

Saturday, July 30 - Pray and reflect on Luke 8:25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Sunday, July 31 - Pray for the combined Sunday Worship at 10 a.m. that will take place at First United Methodist Church for the month of July.



**Summer
WORSHIP
SCHEDULE**

**SCE Sundays
in July and August**

**Save Church Energy!
In July and August First and
Grand Ave and will meet
together on Sunday
mornings at 10:00 a.m.**

In July, both congregations will meet together at First UMC.
In August, both congregations will meet together at Grand Ave UMC.



First UMC

Joan Pharis • July 1
Bill White • July 2
Lou Ellen White • July 6
Ann White • July 10
Joy Leach • July 13
Bobbi Ernst • July 13
Linda Young • July 16
Garrick Burkhardt • July 24
Bob Falls • July 29
Deane Rhoadarmer • July 30

Grand Ave UMC

Linda Brown • July 6
Edna Takakjian • July 8
Lynn Egorov • July 9
Steve Bartlett • July 11
Barbara Smith • July 13
Robin Galloway • July 21
Frances DePaoli • July 24
Sue Wright • July 29
Brooke Borges • July 30

First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC or
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC

View Past Worship Videos on Vimeo
<https://vimeo.com/grandavenueporterville>

Grand Ave Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Director of Youth Ministries • *Ryan Ridenour*
Children's Director • *Melody Burkhardt*
Worship Administrator • *Judy Buratovich*
Treasurer • *Rodel Lipumano (Position Open)*
Custodian • *The Congregation*

First Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Counseling Center Director • *Joy Semple*
Administrative Assistant • *Melissa Sutherland*
Music Coordinator • *Christine Klippenstein*
Children/Custodian • *Melody Burkhardt*

Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-3791

Fax: 559-784-3798

info@grandavenue.org

www.grandavenue.org

*Grand Ave United Methodist Church
776 W. Grand Ave.
Porterville, CA 93257*

First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-4232

pvfumc@ocsnet.net

*First United Methodist Church
344 E. Morton Ave.
Porterville, CA 93257*

Announcements

Wednesday, July 6 • Church Dinner

First and Grand Ave will meet together for a Wednesday night dinner on July 6 at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall at Grand Ave. Chicken will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. After dinner stay for Bunco!

Celebrant Singers In Porterville • July 10

On Sunday, July 10 Celebrant Singers will join our combined 10:00 a.m. Worship Service at First UMC. Hear inspiring music and help send them off on their mission to Poland. Invite a friend!

Dear First Church Porterville

We wish to express our deepest appreciation for all of your care and friendship given to Joy and given to us. You will all be in our hearts and minds. It is our wish to make a donation to the church in mom's name. In His service. The Semple family, *Curt, Keith and Diane*

Clothing Closet at First UMC

Clothing Closet is available only by appointment during July. Call Ann 559-920-0977 for more information. Thanks to all who have made time to help.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the August 2022 Messenger is **July 20**. Thank you.

Tithes and Offering

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of First UMC and Grand Ave UMC.